

Please amend the Application as follows.

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

The present listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application.

Claims 1 - 13. (Cancelled).

Claim 14. (Currently Amended) A silicon nitride material comprising consisting of:

- (a) a sintering aid consisting of Al_2O_3 and Y_2O_3 ; and
- (b) silicon dioxide; and
- (c) optionally a silicide selected from the group consisting of tungsten silicide, molybdenum silicide and combinations thereof, wherein the TiN, tungsten silicide and molybdenum silicide are formed by reacting TiO_2 , WO_3 and MoO_3 with silicon nitride in a ratio of TiO_2 , WO_3 and MoO_3 to silicon nitride of up to 10 mole percent,

the sintering aid[[s]] and silicon dioxide being present in a grain boundary phase;

wherein,

- (i) the silicon dioxide in the grain boundary phase and the sintering aid in the grain boundary phase have a molar ratio of (silicon dioxide) to (silicon dioxide and sintering aid) that is from greater than 0.65 to 0.74,
- (ii) the silicon nitride material has a silicon oxide nitride content that is less than 1% by weight, and
- (iii) said silicon nitride material has a porosity of less than 0.5 % by volume, further wherein said silicon nitride material has a mass loss of less than or equal to 0.3 mg/cm^2 when immersed in HCl at a temperature of 60°C for 500 hours.

Claim 15. (Cancelled)

Claim 16. (Currently Amended) The silicon nitride material of Claim 14, wherein the sintering aid[[s]] and the silicon dioxide are present at an amount so that the grain boundary phase is < 20% by volume.

Claim 17. (Currently Amended) The silicon nitride material of Claim 14, wherein the sintering aid[[s]] and the silicon dioxide are present at an amount so that the grain boundary phase is from 0.1 to 17% by volume.

Claim 18. (Currently Amended) The silicon nitride material of Claim 14, wherein the sintering aid[[s]] and the silicon dioxide are present at an amount so that the grain boundary phase is from 3 to 15% by volume.

Claims 19 - 23. (Cancelled)

Claim 24. (Cancelled)

Claim 25. (Currently Amended) The silicon nitride material of Claim 24 14 further comprising a silicide selected from the group consisting of tungsten silicide, molybdenum silicide and combinations thereof, wherein the TiN, tungsten silicide and molybdenum silicide are formed by reacting TiO_2 , WO_3 and MoO_3 with silicon nitride in a ratio of TiO_2 , WO_3 and MoO_3 to silicon nitride of up to 10 mole percent.

Claim 26. (Previously Presented) The silicon nitride material of Claim 14 wherein the silicon dioxide in the grain boundary phase and the sintering aid in the grain boundary phase have a molar ratio of (silicon dioxide) to (silicon dioxide and sintering aid) of 0.74.

Claim 27. (Previously Presented) The silicon nitride material of Claim 14 wherein the silicon dioxide in the grain boundary phase and the sintering aid in the grain boundary phase have a molar ratio of (silicon dioxide) to (silicon dioxide and sintering aid) of 0.72.

Claim 28. (Previously Presented) The silicon nitride material of Claim 14 wherein Y_2O_3 of sintering aid (a) is present in an amount of 62.5 mole percent, based on the total moles of Y_2O_3 and Al_2O_3 , and Al_2O_3 of sintering aid (a) is present in an amount of 37.5 mole percent, based on the total moles of Y_2O_3 and Al_2O_3 .